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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ELECTIONS PREP - THE SIX STATE TOUR

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Poloffs visited Enugu, Anambra, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Bauchi states over the period of March 20 to 30, meeting with Resident Electoral Commissioners (where possible), NGOs, local media, and other stakeholders in the elections process. With only two weeks to elections, our Poloffs found local INEC officers to be ill-prepared and disorganized -- and occasionally just delusional. INEC headquarters in Abuja announced on March 29 that all Resident Electoral Commissioners and their Administrative Secretaries (deputies) would be separated and reshuffled to other states. NGOs and Media representatives were in general agreement that the preparations to date are inadequate, though there was a mix of opinions on how they measure up to 2003 preparations. One NGO reported being visited by the security services and asked about funding sources in order to "determine eligibility to observe the elections." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Poloffs visited INEC in Enugu, Anambra, Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano and Katsina states, at times meeting with officials and other times being denied meetings but viewing the offices. No INEC office would provide us a list of polling stations or a complete voter registry and several commented they were awaiting this information from Abuja. When Poloffs were able to view a portion of the voters registry, they noted large numbers of incomplete registrations and/or underage registrants. Our Poloff in Kano was shown a direct data capture machine by INEC officials, but the officials were unable to operate the machine when asked about its use. INEC officials in Katsina and Enugu admitted that they had not yet hired the requisite workers to man the polling stations and that training had not yet begun. Enugu INEC Administrative Secretary told Poloff on March 29 that the local INEC office was just beginning to review applications in order to hire the 9000 ad hoc staff the state would need for the elections. INEC officials admitted they have not received ballots nor seen samples. Despite the absence of complete voters and polling station lists, lack of ballots, failure to hire and train requisite staff and general disorganization viewed at each INEC office, we heard without fail that everything is on track and even ahead of schedule.

13. (SBU) In the courtyard outside the Anambra state INEC office, our Poloff observed approximately 50 metallic briefcase-style boxes for direct-data capture machines sitting in the direct sun in 95 degree heat. (Note: we cannot verify whether or not DDC machines were indeed inside the boxes.) The courtyard was also strewn with files boxes of miscellaneous papers. In Katsina, which is the home state of both Yar'Adua and Buhari and is billing itself as a showcase state, Poloff was shown clear plastic bags that will be used to transport the completed ballots. INEC officers claimed the bags had "secret Israeli-manufactured satellite chips" imbedded in them which would allow them to be tracked via GPS on the internet, thereby reducing fraud. (COMMENT. The officials could not point out where these chips were embedded in the clear plastic and the bags appeared to be no more than regular plastic bags. END COMMENT.)

14. (SBU) In Bauchi, media and NGOs told Poloff they expect trouble with the voter registry on polling day. An estimated 80 percent of registrants in Bauchi were given no receipt or card and only verbally told their registration number (which serves as proof of registration). Several stakeholders reported preparations in Bauchi State are worse than in 2003, with one media representative noting an increase in violence as well. NGOs in Bauchi and Kaduna reported visits by the security services. Despite the lack of an observer accreditation process, officers reportedly asked the Bauchi NGO about the organization's activities and funding sources to "determine eligibility for observing." Individuals in Kano reported first-hand knowledge that INEC is still changing the names of Senatorial candidates in Jigawa State. CAMPBELL